

LODI

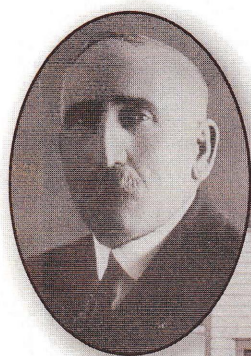
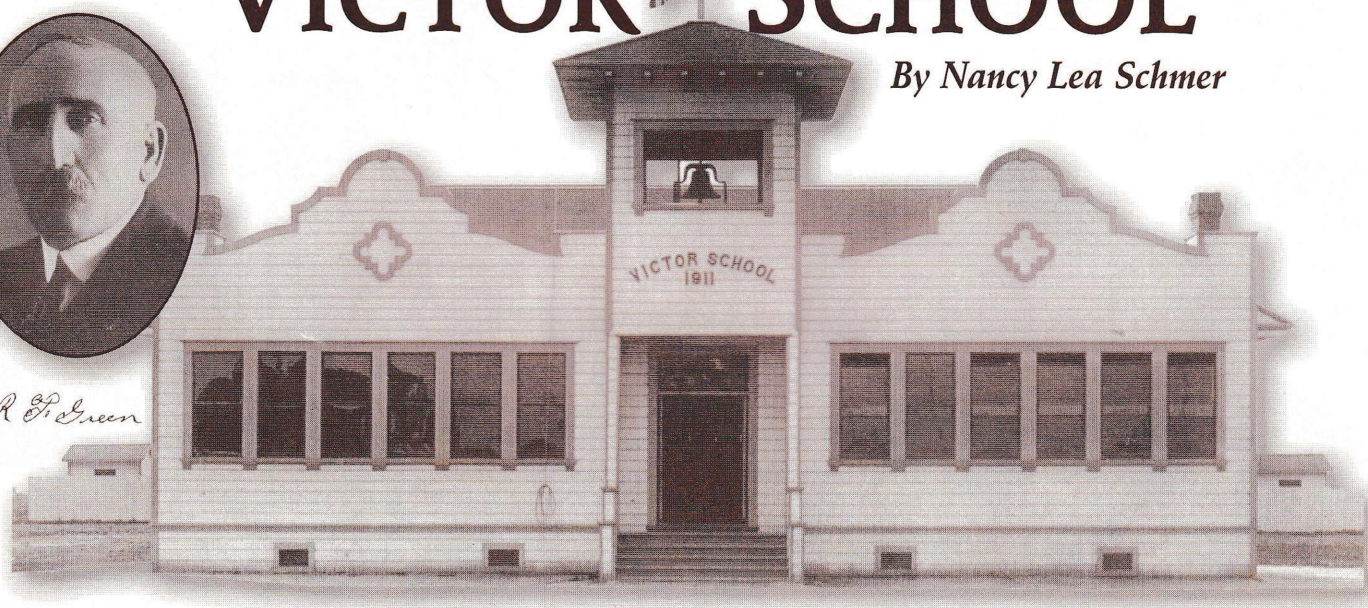
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LODI HISTORIAN

SPRING 2010

VICTOR SCHOOL

By Nancy Lea Schmer*R. F. Green*

The Victor School District became official one hundred years ago, approval having been granted by the San Joaquin County School Superintendent on December 22, 1910. The new district was made up of portions from two other districts, Alpine and Lockeford, both located east of Lodi.

During the previous year, 1909, seventeen parents representing thirty-one school-age children and seventeen preschoolers, organized due to the fact that the families lived more than two miles from the existing schools -

Alpine, Lockeford, and Harmony Grove. Residents of the Alpine district objected to the new formation because it would prevent the employment of two teachers at their school.

The little town of Victor had been growing since the turn of the century, many having moved from the mid-west, specifically the Dakotas. The German families were large and it was soon apparent that Victor needed its own school.

On May 18, 1911, a \$4,000.00 bond election took place at the office of the Victor

Land Company in the town of Victor. Twenty-one people voted yes and none voted no. Robert Franklin "Frank" Green, one of Victor's earliest settlers and largest landowners, donated the land south of Victor Road and J. E. Fitzsimmons, Victor blacksmith and bridge builder, built the two-room schoolhouse.

Sixty-two students, thirty-one boys and thirty-one girls, arrived for the first day of school, grades one through eight, on September 11, 1911. J. E. Condon was the only teacher, paid a salary of \$700.00 for the entire school



▲ Victor School, 1912, two rooms and eight grades, built on Green property by Fitzsimmons.

year, consisting of 190 days. Condon also served as principal and janitor. George Lewis was the first and only eighth grade graduate at the end of the first school year.

Starting school for a young child was not always easy in those days as it often is not easy today. Many children spoke only German at home and were admonished with "No more German" by older students when they arrived at school. They had to learn English quickly!

One of the responsibilities of the older boys in school was to unhitch the teacher's horses from their buggies and put them away

in the barn. They were to reverse the process in the afternoon. Jake (J.E.) Handel tells of the time when they switched the horses and put them on the wrong buggy. The teachers were wise though and, saying nothing, stuck

with their own horse thus ensuring that their own horse would take them home. Mr. Handel also tells of wrapping the school bell clapper in newspaper so that it could not ring and announce the beginning of the school day.



▲ Victor School, circa 1930's.

The following year, teacher Elena Borges helped Condon. Rolla Garretson, son of the Lockeford Justice of the Peace, married Elena and they both taught at Victor School 1913 and 1914.

By 1919, the student enrollment had grown to seventy regular students, and it became clear that the school building was too small. During that year Ruth Declusin joined the teaching staff, replacing Francis Scott in the middle of the term. While the early teachers only stayed one or two years before moving on, Declusin stayed at Victor School for the next twenty-three years, eventually becoming principal.

This five-foot "giant" of a lady was a strong disciplinarian. She was able to handle any situation at school and informed the children how to behave coming and going from school. If there was a serious problem at school, Mrs. Declusin visited the child's home and talked to the parents. Children were taught to remove their hats and stand quietly for any funeral procession on its way to Harmony Grove Cemetery, outside Lockeford. The daily flag salute was held outdoors when weather permitted.

Two years later there were more children than the two rooms could hold, so an additional room was built onto the

west end of the schoolhouse. J. E. Fitzsimmons was a trustee at this time and unable to bid on the addition, so his neighbor, Ezra Billigmeier, obtained the contract and Fitzsimmons constructed the third room that summer. In the fall, a third teacher was hired, Edith Burgstahler. First and second grades were taught in the new classroom and three grades each in the other two classrooms.

The teacher was responsible for many lesson preparations and would listen to one grade recite while others were studying. If a child finished his or her work they only had to listen to the other children reciting their work and he or she would know what



▲ Victor School, 1913. Back row (l to r): Ida Knoll, Bertha Schmierer, Lena Miller, Grace Miller, Martha Frey, Sara Billigmaier, Matilda Hummel, Victor Morton, Katie Frey, John Frey, Lena Heil, Percy Morton, Emma Lachenmaier, unk., Martha Nies. Front row (l to r): Lydia Hummel, Wesley Tappen, Bill Lachenmaier, Emil Nies, John Linde, Edward Schmierer, George Weigum, Freida Heil, Emma Frey.



▲ Victor School, 1914, Grades 1 through 4.



▲ Victor School, 1932.



▲ Victor School Band, c1930. Left to right: Melvin Schmiedt, Effdene Beckman, unk. Schlotthauer, George Schlotthauer, unk. Schlotthauer, Ole Mettler, Ellsworth Beckman, Leon Handel.



A dress-up even
Who is this little



◀ Ruth F. Declusin,
she taught and
served as
principal at
Victor School
for 23 years.

1938: Harold
Goehring, John
Geigle, Reuben
Hein, Leroy
Schmierer, Elmer
Goehring, Hage
Sasaki, Clara
Sasaki, Fern Lea
Helen Garlow
Elsie Goehring
Lorraine Dietz
Delyle Witzle
Irene Willig

Victor School Student Body, c1930's.



at Victor School, c 1935.
Indian? See back page for answer.



Victor School, 1923. ▲



Graduating class of Victor School, 1930; teacher Mrs. Ruth F. Declusin. Left to right: LaVern ▲
Marrs, Freda Christman, Hilda Schmierer, Eleanor Blum, Lenora Handel, Stella Ducas, Gilbert
Zweigle, Leo Geigle, Henry Schmiedt, Edna Pokert, Anna Horst, Rosina Geigle.



Victor School
Students at the
Legion Picnic at
Micke Grove.
Among them are:
Fern Lea,
Elsie Goehring,
Ray Martin,
John Geigle and
Robert Lindley.





▲ Victor School, circa 1933. 8 Grades, Ruth Declusin, Principal.

was in store for him in future years. It was even an opportunity to get a "head start."

In 1924, a boundary change between Victor and Harmony Grove districts was approved, having been initiated by a number of parents.

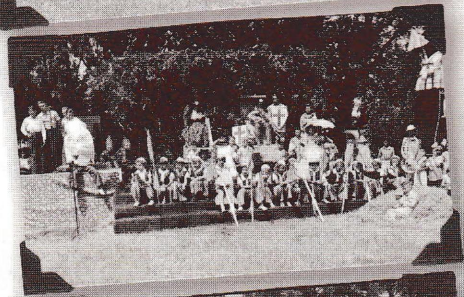
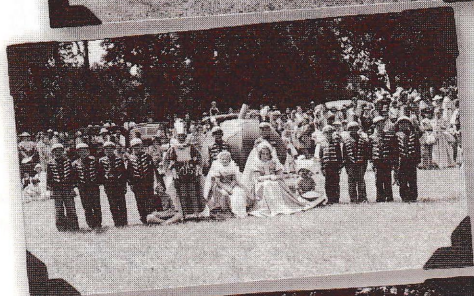
An east wing with a fourth classroom and a stage was added to the school in 1925. The staff consisted of Declusin as principal (who also taught) and three teachers, Vera Garner, Edith Burgstahler, and Gladys Stewart, each taught in their own room. The stage enabled the school to hold its graduation ceremony, Christmas program, and other events at the school. Previously, these events were held in one of the Victor packing sheds.

Fundraising for playground equipment was held by way of

"Dutch Auctions," a type of auction where the auctioneer begins with a high asking price which is lowered until some participant is willing to accept the auctioneer's price. The winning participant pays the last announced price.

Recess was a favorite for children and ball games seemed to be most popular, equipment often provided by the children themselves. Shinny Ball was similar to softball or kickball, but was played with anything such as a tin can for the ball and a tree branch (preferably in the shape of a golf club) as a bat. Marbles and other circle games were also popular. The playground was divided by general consensus of the children and the boys played in the back and the girls in front.

The large Monterey Pine tree on the north side of the school



▲ Pageantry held by Lodi Grammar Schools.

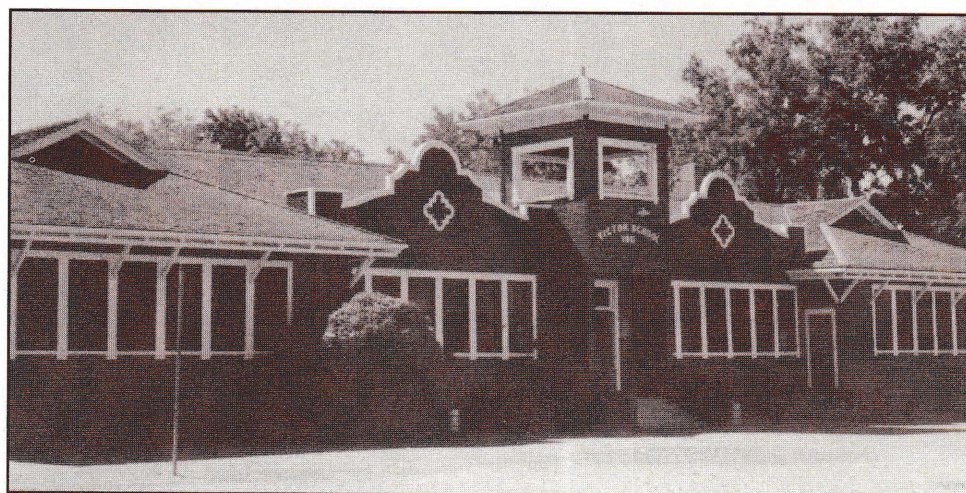
grounds was planted and dedicated April 18, 1932 to the memory of Janet Gowie, Lodi war nurse (WWI) and San Joaquin County school nurse who visited Victor School on a regular basis.

Many schools participated in a May Day celebration performing the traditional Maypole dance. Kids loaded onto wagons or trucks for the annual school picnic, held at Tretheway Grove, then later at Micke's Grove. The country schools alternated with Lodi.

In 1951, the county board of Supervisors joined together the Victor and Alpine districts. The two school boards had already been sharing services such as bus transportation. A new kindergarten class being added and the prospect of fewer grades in each classroom were compelling reasons for joining the two schools.

When Frank Jeans became Principal and eight grade teacher in 1955, he asked the trustees to paint Victor School a bright red. He had admired a red one-room school in the Mother Lode and thought it would be a nice look for the Victor School, which had been white up to that time.

Six years later, the new district purchased the unused Brethren Church, located just



Victor School sporting its current red paint. ▲

west of the Victor School, for \$5,036.00 to be used as additional classroom space.

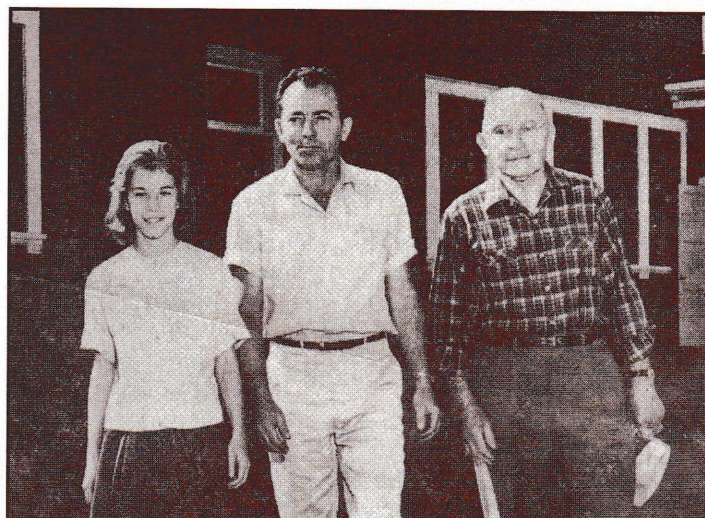
Also in 1961, more than two hundred people, including the first teachers J. E. Condon, F. E. Leffler, Mrs. R. L. Garretson, and Vera Garner attended Victor School's golden anniversary. Irene Wasik, Alpine-Victor Mother's Club President was chairperson and George Schmiedt, an early graduate, was master of ceremonies. There were many third generation graduates in attendance.

A vote to unify all the Lodi area school districts took place in May of 1966 and became effective July 1, 1967 after a very close vote.

The immediate effect of the election was the closing of the old Victor School, except for the church building where kindergarten was held.

The following year, Victor and Alpine schools were declared unsafe under the California State Field Act. The Lodi Adult School held upholstery classes in two of the rooms for a short time, and then the property was sold.

In 1997, the Regional Youth Services/North Valley School



Three generations of Preszler's attending the 50th Anniversary Celebration of Victor School in 1961. William Preszler, class of 1911, his son Neil, and Neil's daughter Pamela. ▲

purchased the old Victor School building at 9150 East Highway 12. Great care was taken to keep the outward appearance much as it was, and restoration, at a cost of \$750,000.00, was completed in 2003. Inside was converted into administrative offices that serve the needs of children placed by the Department of Mental Health.

The new Victor School opened January 1979 at a cost of \$900,000.00 and is located on Bruella Road, just north of the town of Victor, adjacent to the Parkin Memorial Park.

A reunion is planned for past students and faculty for Sunday, August 29, 2010 at the Parkin Memorial Park. For more information, please phone 209-333-0531 or 209-369-3820.

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Mary Ann Blomgren

Ralph Lea

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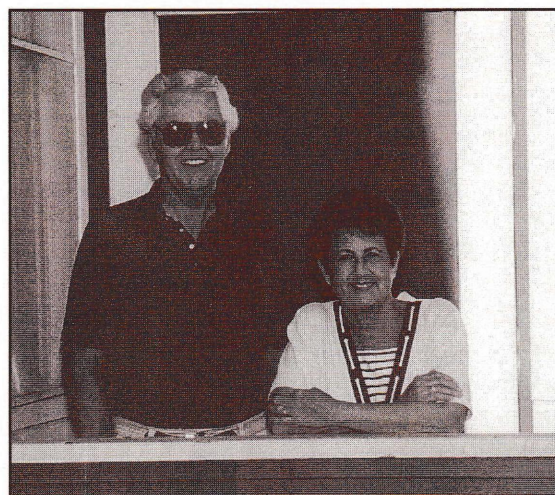
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▲ Ralph Lea and Shirley Heimbuck-Goehring at the 1997 Victor School Reunion. Ralph is also the mysterious Indian circled on the centerspread.



Victor School's 6th grade Science Camp departure, 1964. ▲



▲ **20 Year Reunion:** Members of the 1964 sixth-grade class of Victor School at the 20th year class reunion. Seated l to r: Rhonda Dobler Geigle, Robin Nomura Kundert, Shirley Goehring (class teacher), Janet Nekitas Van Horne, and Deana Fregien Shepherd; standing, middle row: Kathy Weigum Bender, Harlan Knoll, Nevis Fregien, Bobbe Lehr Addington and Marion Hamblin Cirigliano; and back row: Eileen Masui Nakamura, Wayne Christman, Patricia Lea Parkin, Mitchell Okuhara and Gay Knoll Marino. Not pictured: Glen Western.